

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Skilled Nursing Facility Administrators
All Hospitals with Skilled Nursing Facility Units

FROM: Karen Selestak, Director
Division of Health Facilities
Licensure and Certification

SUBJECT: State Requirements for Approval of Paid Feeding Assistant Training
Program (FATPs)

DATE: December 1, 2003

On September 26, 2003, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published the final rule for requirements for paid feeding assistants in Long Term Care Facilities. A copy of the final rule is attached with this mailing (Federal Register/Vol. 68, No. 187/Friday, September 26, 2003/Rules and Regulations, page 55539).

The rule is effective October 27, 2003, and permits long term care facilities that participate in medicare and medicaid programs the option to use paid feeding assistants (both at meals and at snack times) to supplement the services of certified nurse aides under certain conditions. The intent of the rule is to provide more residents with help in eating and drinking and reduce the incidence of unplanned weight loss and dehydration. Facilities must not use any individual working in the facility as a paid feeding assistant unless that individual has successfully completed a State-approved training program for feeding assistants, as specified in the regulations.

You will find enclosed a chart which outlines the Federal requirements versus the State requirements. Please note that there are some significant differences. In addition to the minimum Federal requirements, the State Agency has increased the minimum training course hours from 8 to 16 and has also added several additional subjects/topics to be taught (e.g., role and responsibilities of the feeding assistant; facility policies and procedures on determining % of intake and method of reporting or recording resident intake, etc.).

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In an effort to allow facilities as much flexibility as possible in structuring their own individual programs, the State did not elect to require a competency examination; however, facilities are encouraged to develop and administer some type of competency test for their use in assessing the competency of the feeding assistant student. The State has not established any specific qualification requirements (except for being an RN, LPN, or RD with a current license) for instructors to teach the feeding assistant training program.

Any facility that is interested in obtaining State approval for conducting a Feeding Assistant Training Program must submit the following documents for review and approval (keeping in mind that your program must meet or exceed State requirements): (1) Application for approval of Feeding Assistant Training Program (NATP); (2) Outline of facility's feeding assistant course content/topics, indicating hours each topic will be taught; (3) Names of Instructor(s) and copy of his/her current license; and (4) Example of training certificate to be issued to a feeding assistant upon successful completion of the facility's Feeding Assistant Training Program. These documents must be mailed to: Cheryl Fowler, Special Project Officer III, Mississippi State Department of Health, Division of Health Facilities, Licensure and Certification, P.O. Box 1700, Jackson, MS 39215-1700.

Upon review and approval of the facility's application for approval of a Feeding Assistant Training Program, an authorized representative from the State Agency will stamp the application "APPROVED", and sign and date the application. The date marked on the application by the State Agency will be the date of approval. A copy of the approved application will be returned to the facility for maintenance in the facility's FATP training records file. The original copy will be maintained by the State Agency and a copy will be furnished to the Division of Medicaid.

In addition to maintaining a copy of the approved application, the facility must: (1) maintain a record of all individuals used by the facility as feeding assistants that have successfully completed the feeding assistant training course; (2) keep a copy of the Feeding Assistant Training Certificate issued to each individual that successfully completes the feeding assistant training program; (3) maintain a copy of the training session outline indicating the time allotted for each topic; (4) maintain documentation of each training class and the name of the instructor(s) that taught the class; and (5) maintain copies of all examinations, checklists, and any other relevant training records.

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We have enclosed the following documents with this memorandum:

- Final Rule - Paid Feeding Assistants
- Chart - Federal versus State Feeding Assistant Requirements
- Application for Approval of Feeding Assistant Training Program (FATP)
- Example Feeding Assistant Training Certificate
- Feeding Assistant Quiz (Sample - for facility use as a pre-test or post-test, if desired)

If you have any questions other than those pertaining to reimbursement issues, please contact Cheryl Fowler, Special Project Officer III/Nurse Aide Coordinator, at (601) 576-7337 or 7300. All reimbursement questions should be directed to the Division of Medicaid.

KS/CF/cf

Enclosures: as stated